[President]

The question that Government be granted a sum of Rs. 58,88,962 under Demand XI—Public Works, including Water Works and Drainage was put and carried. The grant was made.

DEMAND XII—ELECTRICITY AND TELEPHONE.

Rs. 26,80,256.

**Mr. K. P. Padmanabha Menon**: (*Electrical Engineer*): Sir, I move for a grant of Rs. 26,80,256 under Demand XII—Electricity and Telephone.

**Mr. James Fletcher**: Sir, I support the Demand. However, I would like to bring to the notice of the Government the need for reducing the cost of electricity to the consumer in Trivandrum, especially to the consumer for domestic purposes.

**President**: What is the rate now?

**Mr. M. K. Nilakanta Aiyar**: 5 annas per unit.

**Mr. James Fletcher**: Though it is said to be five annas per unit, if the amount is not paid in the month in which the Bill is presented, it has to be paid at 6 annas per unit. From the revenue account published in the Administration Report of the Department for the year 1113 it is seen that a sum of Rs. 47,620 is taken as interest. That is about 5 per cent on the investment. Then for depreciation the amount taken is Rs. 53,500 and to pension and provident fund the amount taken is Rs 7,100. Of course, there is liberal provision for these things. But then there is another item, namely, the net revenue carried over to electrical reserve is Rs. 52,510. That is a big amount taken to the reserve fund. Sir, that is probably with a view to support the future generation that such a big amount is set apart. My submission is that this sum is not absolutely necessary and so much need not be taken to the reserve fund.

**President**: Mr. K. P. P. Menon, what is the reserve fund meant for?

**Mr. K. P Padmanabha Menon**: That is to provide against such contingencies as the breakdown of plants not covered by depreciation or any abnormal increase in the cost of oil.

**Mr. James Fletcher**: So far as the breakdown of the machinery is concerned, my submission is that the machines are all very costly and there will be no sudden breakdown so far as they are concerned and that the amount taken for the depreciation fund every year will be ample for the renovation of the machines.

In Calcutta the rate for domestic purposes is 2 annas per unit. In Madras they propose to bring the rate to the level in Calcutta.

**President**: At present the rate in Madras is 4 annas is it not?

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**Mr. James Fletcher :** Yes, Sir. My request is that here too the same rate as is obtaining now in Madras, namely 4 annas per unit, may be charged for electricity used for domestic purposes. Another point that I want to bring to the notice of the Government is this. There are two other works supplying electricity in Nagercoil and Kottayam, run by private agencies. It will be to the advantage of Government if these works are taken over by the Government. I am aware of some disputes and unnecessary misunderstandings between the owner of the electrical supply plant at Nagercoil.....

**Mr. V. S. Arumukham Pillai :** May I inform the member that the matter is sub judice ?

**Mr. James Fletcher :** Sir, I did not go into the legal question. I am just saying that there is some misunderstanding and to avoid that the best thing would be for Government to take over the machinery and other things connected with it. Similarly the electrical supply works at Kottayam also may be taken over by the Government. These being public utility works, it is best that they are nationalised. With the e words I support the demand.

**Mrs. Abernom Gnanasikhamoni** (*Nominated*) : Sir, I support the demand. It relates to a mighty energy which is going to work wonders in our State also. Sir, eliminating distances in the matter of sending messages is one of the primary duties of the administration of a modern progressive State. When I was in Madras ten years ago using the telephone arrangement to talk to a friend at a distance, I thought within myself whether there will come a chance of such a thing in my place, Nagercoil. And such a time is coming in the very near future. The present Government of Travancore have to be congratulated on the steps taken for affording telephone connection with the rest of India and outside the world. Now, as we can no longer be in isolated position in this State, and our brothers and sisters are seeking their fortune everywhere, the Trunk Telephone communication has become an absolute necessity. It is true, it will be a boon to the trading classes and let us believe, our country will be thriving in all spheres under the present Government.

Regarding minimum charges for power, just as the previous speaker said, I have to make a personal representation on the floor of this House. In Trivandrum the minimum rate is Rs. 1-8-0 whereas in Nagercoil the minimum rate is Rs. 2-8-0. That works very hard on the people of Nagercoil. The people there are in no way richer than the people at Trivandrum. I appeal to Government to redress the inequality in the rates obtaining in Nagercoil, as compared with that in Trivandrum.

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**Mr. K. K. Kuruvilla :** Sir, in rising to support this grant I wish to make a few observations. We have been anxiously expecting the supply of electricity for a number of years Our criticisms will have necessarily to stop with the actual supply of power to the people from the beginning of next year.

I am thankful to Mr. Fletcher when he said that the Government should take over the management of electric supply at Kottayam and Nagercoil. Private concerns are working in these places. This is a public utility service and therefore the supply of power should be undertaken by Government.

The second point I would say is that there is a good demand for electric power from rural areas. With the power that is produced in our State, every attempt should be made to satisfy the demands of rural areas in course of time. Electricity could be used for various purposes such as for the extraction of minerals, household purposes etc. For the development of cottage industries, power is essential. The people of Kuttanad areas could be helped to a great extent in the matter of baling out water if they are supplied with electric power. Electrical machines should be substituted for the present machines working in Kuttanad areas for irrigating paddy fields. In the matter of supplying power to those areas I submit that the rates prevailing there must be lower than that in the towns. Government also should endeavour to reduce the rates allowed to ordinary consumers in Trivandrum town and other places. With these words I support the demand.

**Mr. M. K. Ananthasiva Aiyar :** Sir, I oppose the demand. My reasons are these. On a calculation of the figures set apart for electric energy and telephone charges consumed by the various departments of Government, I find that more than Rs. one lakh is expected to be the income of Electrical Department for the supply of current. Altogether, the total amount that is expected as the income, of the department for electric supply of Trivandrum and Quilon towns, is Rs. 4,25,000 or so. Out of this, more than one-fourth the amount is expected to be derived from the Government departments themselves. I must say that I was amused at the calculation made by the Electrical Department in that so much amount was estimated as profit to be derived from Government themselves. I will illustrate it. Suppose I purchase a mango from a shop for one chuckram.

**Mr. Abdul Tayeb Shaikh Kaderbhoy** (*Commerce and Industry South*) : May I know, suppose electricity is not supplied by Government, some substitute such as kerosine oil lamp or gas light has to be made in its place then, will it not be a loss to Government?

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**Mr. M. K. Ananthasiva Aiyar :** Then, the loss will be much less. Suppose I purchase a mango for one chuckram with my right hand and sell it to my left hand for 1½ chuckrams ?

**President :** Suppose you expected your left hand to work in a commercial manner and the right hand in the gastronomic manner, what would be the result ?

**Mr. M. K. Ananthasiva Aiyar :** It is more personal. That is the difficulty. What I want to submit in this connection is this. In consideration of the fact that the departments of Government are consuming a lot of energy and paying for it at specified rates, why not the concession which the Electrical Department is giving to private firms and industrial concerns in the matter of power be shown to the Government departments also ?

**Mr. K. P. Padmanabha Menon :** Does the member realise that all the profit goes back to the Government ?

**Mr. M K. Ananthasiva Aiyar :** Whether it goes to Government or anybody else, that is no question at all when commercially viewed. In case the Electrical Department will sell electric energy to various Government departments at the rates at which they sell energy to private firms and industrial concerns who take energy on a larger scale, then the profit earned by the department will be seen to be much less. Taking that into consideration, I think it is high time to see whether the expenses incurred for establishment charges of the department could be revised.

So far as the Trivandrum Electric supply is concerned, I find the office is overmanned. After all, the area of Trivandrum town is very small from the standpoint of electric supply. Besides the Electrical Engineer to Government who gets a pay of Rs. 700, there is an Executive Engineer on Rs. 500—700. It has to be noted that the head of the department gets a pay of Rs. 500—700 and his assistant too gets the same pay. Then there is a Superintendent under the Executive Engineer on Rs. 100—150, a Station Engineer on the same scale, an Assistant Engineer on Rs. 75—100, another Mains Engineer on Rs. 100—150, and yet another to look after Government buildings on more or less the same pay and so on and so forth. Similarly, coming to Quilon there also the same set of officers more or less. Considering the small work which they have to execute and the small profit they will be able to show as per my calculation adverted to above, my view is that some officers of the superior grade could be curtailed. Further, there is one thing we have to look into We, on this side of the House have been protesting about the high scale of salaries that is being paid to officers. Yesterdoy, many of the honourable members suggested that the maximum pay of the officers should be Rs. 500 and not more than that.

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[Mr. M K. Ananthasiva Aiyar]

In so far as the Electrical Engineer is already receiving a pay of Rs. 700, I do not suggest that should be reduced. When the Executive Engineer who gets a pay of Rs. 500—700 reaches the maximum in the grade, what will be the position of the Electrical Engineer to Government? Certainly his pay must be higher than that. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that the post of the Executive Engineer could be safely taken away from the staff of the Electrical Department at Trivandrum. Similarly I would urge that some of the superfluous staff of assistants could also be obsorbed elsewhere.

In connection with the Pallivasal Hydro Electric Scheme there is one Electrical Executive Engineer functioning at Kothamangalam. The work there has already been completed so much so there is no necessity for an officer of that status there. The power house has already been built up. According to the Administration Report of 1113 all the works in connection with the transmission lines have been completed. When current is not available in that place, I doubt whether an Executive Engineer is necessary there. Similarly at Pallom also no officer need be stationed. I think he is drawing a pay of Rs. 200 per mensem. I am at a loss to see what so many officers who are drawing higher pay are doing in those places especially after the main items of work have been finished there. Under these circumstances, as a matter of economy, I would urge upon the Electrical Engineer to Government to revise the scale of pay of the officers as well as to reduce the staff in his department.

**Mr. T. Mahomed Ismail:** May I ask the member whether the superfluity in staff exists in this department alone?

**Mr. M. K. Ananthasiva Aiyar:** I had time to study about this department and therefore I would urge upon the Electrical Engineer to Government to see if a substantial reduction could be made in the matter of expenses appertaining to that department. I have not looked into the cases of other departments.

**Mr. Kottoor Kunjukrishna Pillai:** Sir, I wish to offer a few remarks regarding this demand. It is one of the most successful commercial undertakings which the Government themselves have undertaken. This is one of the departments that bring credit to Government and it is proved that provided there is a person who devotes his wholehearted attention to a commercial undertaking, even if he is a Government officer, the concern can be run profitably and even commercial undertakings can be made a success. I hope that the example of this department will be followed by other commercial undertakings as well. Sir, the accounts of the Electrical Department have been separately given and every detail

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has been furnished to us. When we criticise a commercial undertaking, we have to be particularly careful in maing remarks with regard to it, because the success of a commercial concern depends very much on the good faith and on the confidence that the public bestows on it. Therefore, I would not permit myself to make remarks without fully understanding the working of such a technical department as the Electrial Department. For instance, I cannot say that the number of officers and the quality and grading of officers so far as the electric supply of such an important town as Trivandrum is concerned, can be lessened. I do not make myself bold to make such a statement, because to play with power or electricity is a very serious matter. And, in the Trivandrum town, if the management and control of the department is kept in the hands of inefficient or irresponsible persons or that the control is not sufficient, the resultant danger may be very great. Therefore, I would not make myself responsible to make any suggestions with regard to the curtailment of officers, so far as Trivandrum Division of the Electric Department is concerned.

We have found that the department, like a very conservative business man, is making its provision for the future and I think that the department is well advised in keeping very good reserves, sinking fund, depreciation charges etc. So even if they err on the side of conservatism it connot be blamed, because if the department does not show a profit and it wants some money from the general tax-payers fund, then the House will not look on it with so much of confidence and the criticisms will be very bitter. Therefore, in spite of the conservative caution exercised by the department, I think it is better to show to the public that the department is run on a profitable basis rather than one on very liberal lines but ending in lose.

I agree with my friend Mr. Fletcher in thinking that there is a possibility of reduction without affecting the revenue of the Electric Department in Trivandrum. Sir, a reduction has been made last year and what has been the result. The result has not been a reduction in the revenue. On the other hand, in spite of the reduction in rates, the revenue has increased. We must be able to give a larger facility for the ordinary man to use electricity for his various needs and we should also make it possible for the ordinary man to enjoy this benefit which has become not a luxury, but an article of necessity.

Sir, with regard to the question of taking over to the department, private concerns like the electric supply in Nagercoil,

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[Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai]

Kottayam and Munnar, I agree with my friend Mr. Fletcher. It is stated in the Administration Report that with the advent of the Pallivasal Hydro Electric Scheme, a possibility that the Kottayam and Munnar works will be taken over is indicated. We are apprehensive because there is no mention of Nagercoil I was surprised to hear from the Lady Member that in Nagercoil, the private concern is charging a minimum rate of Rs. 2-8-0. He has no business to do so. He is holding a monopoly of the supply of electric energy. I think the department ought to intervene and reduce the minimum charges. I should even say that the department should not lose time to take over the concern and run it by itself. It is also shown that the electric supply in Nagercoil is not run on a profit.

**President** : The House will now adjourn and meet again at 2 o'clock.

The House adjourned for lunch at 1 P. M. and re assembled at 2 P. M. with the President in the Chair.

## NEW MEMBER.

Mr. E. G. Salter took the oath and signed the Rolls.

**Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai** : Sir, I was speaking about the rates of the Nagercoil Electrical Supply Corporation. I think the department will have sufficient powers to exercise control over the rates and see that it is reduced. It cannot be said that the average man in Nagercoil consumes more energy than the average man in Trivandrum. There can be no justification for these high rates.

It has been pointed out by the honourable member Mr. Ananthasiva Aiyar that the system of charging Government with very high rates is not good as it enables the department only to show enhanced profits. When the department is run on commercial lines, I cannot understand how it can show partiality as between the consumers of electricity. I do not know for whose benefit Mr. Ananthasiva Aiyar was speaking. Was it for the benefit of the private cousumer? Was it for the benefit of the Government or for the benefit of the department? I do not know for whom he was speaking? Unless the rates are equal with regard to Government and private consumers and unless the income is derived accordingly there will not be the likelihood of the lessening of the rates for the private consumer. Do you want to say that the figure is artificially kept up by the department. So far as the department is concerned the consumption of energy by Government should be considered as on equal terms with the private consumer and then only will it be

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